

## All eyes on Budak Koleq

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Comment

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MY alma mater made headlines last week. N. J. Ryan was bestowed the title "Datuk" by the Sultan of Perak.

The acclaimed last expatriate headmaster of Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK) wrote a book entitled The Last Expatriate detailing his experience in the institution, better known as "Koleq".

He was at the helm from 1959 to 1965, the eighth Mat Salleh after William Hargreaves (to some of us he is "Bargreaves"), who took office in 1905 when the college was established.

Ryan turned 80 recently and was honoured by his former students, namely the more renowned rugby players of the MCKK All-Blacks. Some even dared to claim that they were as good as their New Zealand counterparts -- "a good try" as they say in rugby.

Ryan made rugby synonymous with the college. He turned the game into a passion among employees and students. Those who cannot play the game -- for one reason or another -- still knew the rules well. Others took to cheering keenly. When a game was on, all hell literally broke loose at the college field. Worst if the team lost!

Soon MCKK became the name to bet on when it came to rugby during the days of Ryan. The team was feared by many, near and far -- as distant as Sri Lanka. Most would remember the annual game with Vajiravudh College of Thailand started since 1961.

The All-Blacks made their presence felt at the Southeast Asian circuit, thanks to the Mat Salleh headmaster.

Apart from rugby, Ryan made MCKK an unforgettable place not only to study but also to live and learn. He was quoted as saying: "One of the great things I observed at MCKK was the speed at which things were done and the splendid facilities. Having studied at a boarding school myself in England, I was able to comprehend the situation there."

Just like rugby where speed is of the essence, an education at MCKK too shared many of the characteristics of the game, known for players' superb teamwork, dedication and courage.

Sadly, many of these qualities are missing today as our education seems to mirror another game -- national soccer.

The other headline was centred on yet another MCKK rugby player -- Datuk Dr Halili Rahmat. His name leaped into the public arena after the tragic accident of celebrity Zaiton Sameon some years ago.

To quote Shahril@Bob Petabi: "Dr Halili became famous as the surgeon who operated on Zaiton Sameon's brain."

Some would add he did it almost single-handedly! Such is the calibre of the neurosurgeon.

There are not too many of them in Malaysia, fewer still as good as Dr Halili.

Many know Dr Halili as a jovial and creative student. Asked to construct a sentence using the word "roket", he blurted out: "Kereta itu meroket lajunya!"

Hailed from an ulu enclave (then literally), he is determined and hard-working.

And like all budak Koleq, he has own mischievous streak -- some called this a survival instinct of sorts, needed in a competitive place such as MCKK. Without one, life could be reduced to a nerdy one, and this is not what MCKK was all about!

So when his name grabs the headline, many sit up and listen! After all it is coming from a principled brain surgeon-cum-former rugby player.

A daily quoted Dr Halili as saying: "Saya tak pandai berkata-kata dan mengutuk orang tetapi saya hanya menyebelahi (pilih) pihak yang benar."

This can be traced back to the college motto: Fiat Sapientia Virtus! It would have made Ryan smile with pride!

Not to be missed at Dr Halili's recent press conference is another budak Koleq, Datuk Sallehuddin Hashim! He

had his share of the headlines a while back.

No doubt some names are in the press virtually all the time, rightly or wrongly. But it is not as exciting as the cameos who appear and steal the limelight!

The coming days or weeks will prove even more exciting as the plot thickens. How it ends is difficult to tell, but my wish would be Dr Halili doing open brain surgeries on some politicians!

And that Malaysians live happily ever after!

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